

# Who was Lord Basaveshwara?

Science Tech Art Culture | GS1: Arts & Culture

Note4Students | From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :  
 Prelims level : Lord Basaveshwara and his philosophy  
 Mains level : Six schools of Indian Philosophy

Prime Minister has offered his homage to the 12th-century social reformer Basaveshwara on his birth anniversary.

*Vaishnavism and Shaivism are the two most profound strands of Bhakti Movement in Indian history. Enlist all the Bhakti Saints and their theistic philosophy and teachings. Try to spot the minute differences between them.*

## Lord Basaveshwara

- Basaveshwara or Basavanna was an Indian 12th-century statesman, philosopher, a poet and Lingayat saint in the Shiva-focused Bhakti movement and a social reformer in Karnataka.
- He lived during the reign of the Kalyani Chalukya/Kalachuri dynasty.
- He was active during the rule of both dynasties but reached his peak of influence during the rule of King Bijjala II in Karnataka, India .

## Founder of Lingayat cult

- The traditional legends and hagiographic texts state Basava to be the founder of the Lingayats.
- However, modern scholarship relying on historical evidence such as the Kalachuri inscriptions state that Basava was the poet-philosopher who revived, refined and energized an already existing tradition.

## His Philosophy

- Basava's Lingayat theology was a form of qualified nondualism, wherein the individual Atman (soul) is the body of God, and that there is no difference between Shiva and Atman (self, soul).
- Basava's views finds places in Vedanta school, in a form closer to the 11th century Vishishtadvaita philosopher Ramanuja.

## Famous works

- Basavanna spread social awareness through his poetry, popularly known as Vachanaas.

- Basavanna rejected gender or social discrimination, superstitions and rituals but introduced Ishtalinga necklace, with an image of the Shiva Linga to every person regardless of his or her birth.
- As the chief minister of his kingdom, he introduced new public institutions such as the Anubhava Mantapa (or, the "hall of spiritual experience") which welcomed men and women from all socio-economic backgrounds.

## Back2Basics: Bhakti Movement

- The Bhakti movement refers to the theistic devotional trend that emerged in medieval Hinduism.
- It originated in eighth-century south India and spread northwards.
- It swept over east and north India from the 15th century onwards, reaching its zenith between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century CE.
- It has traditionally been considered as an influential social reformation in Hinduism, and provided an individual-focused alternative path to spirituality regardless of one's birth or gender
- Salvation which was previously considered attainable only by men of Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya castes, became available to everyone.

# Raja Ravi Varma, the painter who helped Indians bring their gods home

Science Tech Art Culture | GS1: Arts & Culture

Note4Students | From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :  
 Prelims level : Europeanized school of painting in India  
 Mains level : NA

April 29 is the birth anniversary of the famed Indian painter Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906), remembered for giving Indians their western, classical representations of Hindu gods and goddesses.

## Raja Ravi Varma

- Varma was born into aristocracy at Kilimanoor in the erstwhile Travancore state of present-day Kerala and was closely related to its royal family.
- At the age of 14, Varma was patronised by Ayilyam Thirunal, the then ruler of Travancore, and went on to receive training in watercolours from Ramaswamy Naidu, the royal painter.

- Later, Varma studied oil painting with the British painter Theodore Jensen.

Apart from Travancore, Varma also worked for other wealthy patrons such as the Gaekwad of Baroda.

## Major works

- A prolific artist, Varma is believed to have made around 7,000 paintings before his death.
- Varma worked on both portrait and landscape paintings and is considered among the first Indian artists to use oil paints.
- Apart from painting Hindu mythological figures, Varma also made portraits of many Indians as well as Europeans.



- His most famous works include Damayanti Talking to a Swan, Shakuntala Looking for Dushyanta, Nair Lady Adorning Her Hair, and Shantanu and Matsyagandha.

## His legacy

- He continues to be regarded as the most important representative of the Europeanized school of painting in India.
- His 1873 painting, Nair Lady Adorning Her Hair, won Varma prestigious awards including Governor's Gold Medal when it was presented in the Madras Presidency and Certificate of Merit at an exhibition in Vienna.
- In 1904, the British colonial government awarded Varma with the Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal.
- In 2013, a crater on the planet Mercury was named in his honour.

# [pib] HCARD robot to assist frontline COVID-19 healthcare warriors

Science Tech Art Culture | GS3: Awareness In The Fields Of It, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-Technology, Bio-Technology, Pharma Sector & Health Science

Note4Students | From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :  
Prelims level : HCARD  
Mains level : Technology assistance for COVID-19 containment

HCARD, a robot, to assist frontline COVID-19 healthcare warriors has been developed by a CSIR lab.

*It is very unlikely to create a prelim question on HCARD. However, developments as such help in exemplifying the scientific developments which helped contain such highly contagious outbreaks.*

## What is HCARD?

- The robotic device HCARD, an acronym for Hospital Care Assistive Robotic Device, can help frontline healthcare workers in maintaining physical distance from those infected by the coronavirus.
- The device is equipped with various state-of-the-art technologies and works both



in automatic as well as manual modes of navigation.

- This robot can be controlled and monitored by a nursing booth with a control station having such features as navigation, drawer activation for providing medicines and food to patients, sample collection and audio-visual communication.
- The cost of this device is less than Rs 5 lakh and the weight is less than 80 kilograms.

## MINORITY ISSUES - SC, ST, DALITS, OBC, RESERVATIONS, ETC.

# Religious Freedom and India

Science Tech Art Culture | GS1: Communalism, Secularism, Regionalism

Note4Students | From UPSC perspective, the following things are important :  
Prelims level : Not Much  
Mains level : Religious freedom in India

- The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has downgraded India to the lowest ranking, "countries of particular concern" (CPC) in its 2020 report.

*Religious freedom in India has been a contested issue since decades. Recent moves by the govt. since the abrogation of Art. 370 which triggered the riots in Delhi has left a big scar on the secular fabric of India.*

## What is PICS?

- It is a U.S. federal government commission created by the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998.
- Its principal responsibilities are to review the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom internationally.

Accusing India of religious intolerance

- USCIRF has placed India alongside China, North Korea, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.
- India was categorised as a "Tier 2 country" in last year's listing.

- This is the first time since 2004 that India has been placed in the CPC category.
- The commission also recommended that the U.S. government take stringent action against India under the "International Religious Freedom Act" (IRFA).

## What led India to lower its religious freedom?

- India took a sharp downward turn in 2019 due to concerns about the Citizenship Amendment Act, the proposed National Register for Citizens, anti-conversion laws and the situation in Jammu and Kashmir.
- The report accuses India using its strengthened parliamentary majority to institute national-level policies violating religious freedom across India.
- The panel reported harassment and violence against religious minorities to continue with impunity, and engaged in and tolerated hate speech and incitement to violence against them.

## India's reaction

- The Centre reacted sharply to the USCIRF report terming it "biased and tendentious" and rejected its observations.
- The biased and tendentious comments against India are not new. But on this occasion, its misrepresentation has reached new levels.
- Major panellists of USCIRF dissented with the recommendation on India as being 'too harsh' and that ended up placing the country alongside what they termed as "rogue nations" like China and North Korea.
- India regards the accusations as inaccurate and unwarranted and questioned the body's "locus standi" in India's internal affairs.

## US's religious activism: Unwelcomed by all

- The US earlier this month has announced the launch of a 27-nation International Religious Freedom Alliance, which aim to adopt a collective approach in protecting and preserving religious freedom across the world.
- Among the prominent countries to join the alliance are Brazil, the United Kingdom, Israel, Ukraine, the Netherlands and Greece.
- The USCIRF has been accused worldwide of being biased towards focusing on the persecution of Christians and of being anti-Muslim & Hinduphobic. It panels various controversial personalities.